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ABSTRACT

Recent changes in policy and research regarding immigrants and schools in France are examined in this paper. The first part discusses changes in France's social and political context--in the immigrant population and in educational policies. The second section reviews theoretical explanations of immigrant school performance with regard to social class and cultural differences, institutionalized discrimination in the schools, and the role of family mobilization. Most of these theories focus on school processes without considering their link to other socializing agencies, such as the neighborhood and workplace. A multilevel analysis of these agencies is needed to understand the structural factors that influence minority school performance, such as neighborhood segregation and job discrimination. A model is presented that uses three parameters to compare the differences between immigrants of different nationalities in school attitudes and performance: the degrees of integration, assimilation, and participation. Two tables are included. (Contains 43 references.) (LMI)

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France's status as an immigration country rests on a paradox. Although at several moments in its history the percentage of immigrants in the population has been superior to that of the United States, it has not usually been perceived by the international community as an immigrant, not to say multi-ethnic, nation. Both the official ideology of assimilation and its translation into nationality laws, employment, residential and educational policies, and the silence that has until fairly recently surrounded immigrant specific problems explain this contradiction. Nevertheless, since the 1970's, and particularly in the last decade, changes in the composition of the immigration groups and in the immigrants' social, economic and legal position have contributed to cast them at the center of the political scene and to bring about significant albeit still minor changes in official discourse and action. One of the main changes concerns the increased focus on schooling. As in the United States in the 1960's, schools are both being strongly critized for producing and reproducing social and ethnic inequality and segregation and reinvested as the main pathway for immigrants' integration (Henriot-van Zanten, 1991).

Social science literature on immigrants still remains relatively scattered and heterogenous despite recent review works such as the one conducted by Dubet (1989). Researchers of course do not work in a vacuum and the absence of political interest, of official statistics (it is only since the middle of the 1970's for instance that children of foreign origin are counted separately from French children in the statistics published by the Ministry of Education) and of government support for research on this topic partly

explains this situation. Scientific reasons, however, are important too. Research in this area has frequently been conducted with political or remedial goals in mind by a handful of individuals strongly related to political associations or social work and educational institutions. For a long period, Marxist-oriented university sociologists have tended to consider it as a marginal question given the preeminence of class over cultural factors; Anthropologists have until recently been more interested in rural societies and remained too small a community to defend a different point of view. Nevertheless, both as a consequence of the renewed lay interest in the "immigrant problem" and of the influence of anglo-saxon paradigms and methods of inquiry, a small but interesting number of works have been produced in the last years on the schooling of immigrants.

THE CHANGING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Changes in the immigrant population

One of the major changes that has affected immigration in France, as in many other European countries, concerns the composition of the immigrant population. Although the immigrant population represents today a slightly higher share of the total population than in the 1930's (6.8%), it has become much more visible because of its heterogeneity and of the increasing weight of immigrants from non-EEC countries. As illustrated by the table below, there has been a consistant decrease of immigrants from neighboring European countries such as Spain and Italy and an increase of immigrants from the African and the Asian continents. Inside the European group, it is also important to note the increase and the subsequent stability of the Portuguese and the recent arrival of immigrants from the East of Europe. Inside the non-European group, the North Africans (Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians) still constitute the dominant group, but recent waves from Turkey and from South East Asia, have introduced a much greater variety of origins.

Table 1 : Evolution of the distribution of immigrant communities in France since 1954

NATIONALITY	1954	1975	1982
Europeans	**81.1**	**61.1**	**47.8**
Portugese	1.1	22.0	20.8
Italians	28.8	13.4	9.1
Spaniards	16.4	14.4	8.7
Polish	15.3	2.7	1.8
Others	19.5	8.6	7.4
Africans	**13.0**	**34.6**	**42.8**
Algerians	12.0	20.6	21.6
Moroccans	0.6	7.6	11.7
Tunisians	0.3	4.1	5.1
Others	0.1	2.3	4.4.
Asians	**2.3**	**3.0**	**8.0**
Turcs	0.3	1.5	3.4
Others	2.0	1.5	4.6
Americans	**2.8**	**1.2**	**1.4**

Source : INSEE - Population Census

A second major change concerns the nature of immigration. Prior to the 1970's, immigration was mainly manpower immigration, that is a mouvement of unskilled individual workers who came to France from semi-industralized or non-industralized countries either on their own or through private entreprises to find better jobs and better working conditions and who were expected to contribute to economic development in periods of expansion. Although progressively the overt ideology became that of assimilating these workers by providing state services and by facilitating the entry of family members, it is not until the definite freeze imposed on the recruitement of foreign manpower after the oil crisis of 1973 that the nature of immigration changed. Initially intended only to stop the flow of arrivals, strict reglementation encouraged in fact immigrants to stay, to bring their families and to adopt a long-term social mobility perspective for their children. As a result, immigration could no longer be perceived by the French governement and the population as a transient phenomenon but as an inescapable enduring social reality (Mauco, 1977).

A third important change concerns the social, economic and legal status of immigrants. As in many other European countries, immigrants have traditionnally occupied lower-status jobs in the industrial or in the building and public works sectors of the economy. Recent analysis show that immigrants, although not initially as affected as French workers by the economic crisis that led to the disappeareance of thousands of unskilled jobs in industry, are presently very severely concerned by unemployement. Nevertheless, the most recent statististics reveal that the unemployement

rate grows more slowly and even decreases among immigrants as they are more willing than French workers to accept temporary and hard jobs. A small but significant number of them have become more qualified and have moved up in the social scale to become white-collar employees. Ethnic business of various kinds, especially in the food or the cloth industry, have also flourished in big cities. Their situation with regard to the law has also become less precarious with the delivery of ten-year work permits and the growing number of "second and third generation" immigrants who according to the French nationality code can choose to become French at adolescence.

Despite these positive steps toward integration, immigrants have also progressively become the target of ultra-nationalist movements and of a small but significant fraction of the population who see them as a threat to French culture and society. In fact, changes in the composition, the nature and the legal status of immigrants are presently calling into question the traditional image of the French melting pot where individual workers of European origin integrated the economic and social system, progressively assimilated into the cultural system and earned French nationality and political rights as a reward for many years of efforts and goodwill (Noiriel, 1988). The second or third generation youngster of Algerian descent has become the symbol of the "new immigrant". This youngster is seen as a threat to the French conception of citinzenship because it is automatically entitled to French nationality. It is seen as a threat to the cultural ideal because although he has assimilated many elements of French culture, he remains essentially "different" and has even recently started to revendicate an ethnic identity. It is seen as a threat to the democratic society because his persistent exclusion from the social and the economic system shakes the foundations of the egalitarian model.

Changes in Educational policies

These social transformations call into question the functionning of schools perhaps even more than in other European countries as the French system of education was explicitly conceived from the onset as a powerful agency of the nation state. The primary school system instituted by the School laws of the Third Republic (1881-1886) rested on a clear political project that affirmed the primacy of the general on the particular, of logic on experience and of a lay ethic on particular beliefs. The school was conceived as one of

the main vehicles for the transmission of a unique, national culture that should provide the basis of political cohesion and stability. It was also conceived as a democratizing agency where equality was synonymous with uniformity, that is with the existence and the extension of a "common school" where an homogenous teaching force will teach the same curriculum in similar premises to interchangeable children throughout the country (Costa-Lascoux, 1989; Anderson-Levitt, Mazurier & Sirota, 1992).

It is not therefore surprising that the schooling of immigrants did not receive until the last years more than a limited attention : they as all others were expected to assimilate and to integrate into French society through the "common school". The main dispositions taken in the 1970's to cope with the arrival of important waves of immigrant children in urban schools represented in fact only a slight departure from general principles to ensure their adaptation. The first measures were essentially designed to deal with the linguistic problems of immigrant children. They consisted in the creation of special classes in primary and secondary schools giving a reinforced training in the French language (CLIN, CLAD, CRI). They were followed by the creation, between 1975 and 1986, of centers for the training and the information of teachers concerning the specific problems of immigrant children (CEFISEM) in each of the Academies (regional educational authorities). Since 1975, schools receiving a large immigrant population have also had the possibility of proposing the teaching of the children's native tongue and culture at school by teachers from their own countries (ELCO).

Not only were these measures modest in scope but, as underlined by the Berque report (1985), implementation problems have considerably hindered their efficacity. Adaptation classes have not in many cases fulfilled their goals because they have been given to ordinary teachers and not unfrequently to beginners. The programs and methods of teaching have not received sufficient attention either. Many teachers have just applied curriculum programs designed for teaching French as a foreign language whereas the linguistic problems of the children are frequently very different in nature. The focusing on linguistic difficulties has also led to a neglect of other areas of learning and of the necessary articulation with the primary school common program. Moreover, in an important number of cases, these classes have been used to isolate immigrant children with learning difficulties not necessarily related to their mastery of the French language

and thus contributed to their school segregation.

Although the introduction of the teaching of the children's natives tongues and cultures into school curriculum reflects a shift from the traditional assimilationist perspective toward a "cultural pluralism" perspective, in fact the impact of this policy has also been quite limited because of various reasons : lack of place and of pedagogical materials, limited pedagogical competence of the teachers sent by the different countries having signed a treaty with France, distance between the official language and the culture presented in those classes and the various dialects spoken by the children at home and their experience of immigration, lack of integration into the normal curriculum and interference with other courses. All these reasons have led a growing number of immigrant parents to refuse to send their children to these classes.

The working of the CEFISEM centers has been extremely diverse and very much dependant on the strenght of the initial team, on the importance of the network of outside contributors whether teachers, university professors or social workers and on encouragement from local educational authorities and training centers. It must be kept in mind that their task has been immense given the fact that only in 1986-1987 was it decided that all teachers-in-training should receive a minimum special teaching on the schooling problems of immigrant children while in the Ecoles Normales. More generally, the problems encountered by the CEFISEM and by all the measures taken in favor of immigrant children must also be attributed to the lack of a coordination structure providing a coherent frame of action either at the national or at the local level.

Nevertheless, since the beginning of the 1980's there has been an important reorientation of the educational system that could have considerable implications for the schooling of immigrant children. Although not explicitly designed to deal specifically with their problems, Educational Priority Areas, created in 1981, have been chosen using as one of the main criteria the percentage of immigrant children at school. The action programs that have been elaborated by teachers working in those areas have frequently concerned immigrant children especially those centered on giving different kinds of school aid ("soutien scolaire") inside and outside the school. These new projects, that are part of a global decentralization reform, also open up new possibilities for dealing with the interaction

between schooling problems and housing and employment problems. However, as pointed out by Lorcerie (1988), there seems to be a growing gap between organizational reforms and political discourse. Politicians and teachers' representatives seem both convinced of the necessity of applying specific measures to disadvantaged populations and unwilling to present a legitimate rationale for positive discrimination in favor of immigrant children because they fear that the break-up of the unified system will give way to the constitution of a dual system of education that will reinforce segregation and exclusion.

THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF IMMIGRANT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The overwhelming impact of social class

A consistant line of thought concerning the schooling of immigrant children has been, as we mentionned earlier, to consider them as equals to French working-class children. It seems certainly difficult to ignore that immigrant children belong in their great majority to lower-class families (90% versus 44% French children), that they come much more frequently from large families (53% from families of four children or more vs. 17.5% of French pupils); that their parents have had little formal schooling (87% of parents have at best just completed primary education for 46% of French parents) or that they are much less likely to have mothers active in the labor force (13% vs. 43% of French pupils) (Duru-Bellat & Henriot-van Zanten, 1992). What seems questionable is the tendency of most official reports and statistical research works (Bastide, 1982; Boulot & Boyson-Fradet,1987) to consistently minimize the differences between immigrant and working-class children.

Differences are indeed frequently small when one compares French and immigrant children of similar social characteristics but this is not always the case. Immigrant children still differ from French children for instance in the number of years of attendance of pre-school although the gap between the two categories has tended to narrow rapidly in the latter years. Statistics also show that an important minority (9.2%) of immigrant children enters the primary school at 7 years-old, that is one year behind the norm, which is the case of only 1.4% of French children. This phenomenon is directly

related to the time of arrival in France (among immigrant children born in France this percentage decreases to 4%) but it also points out to specific problems already encountered at pre-school level. At the end of the first year in primary school 25% of immigrant children born in France repeat the school year. This is still a much higher percentage than that of French children belonging to the category of unskilled workers (19.2%).

Moreover, differences between lower-class French and immigrant children are not always in favor of the former. As noted by researchers in other countries, one of the most interesting questions concerning immigrant children is how an important proportion of them manage to stay and succeed at school despite so many barriers (Suarez-Orozco, 1989; Gibson, 1992). In France, it appears clearly that immigrant children improve their performances at higher levels of the educational system. At the end of primary school, immigrant children are more frequently one year or more behind the norm than French children (44.9% vs. 27.6%) but the difference turns in their favor when one compares them with lower-class French children. The situation is the same concerning orientation into special classes officially created to host children exhibiting intellectual deficiencies. Although immigrant children are much more represented in those classes than French children, they still are in a better position than lower-class French children.

At the secondary level, the comparison between French and immigrant children becomes more complex as the "common school" dissolves into tracks and options of unequal social value. During the first two years which are common to all children, immigrant children are less likely than their French classmates to fall behind and repeat school years. The same is true of those who are able to attain the second cycle leading to the baccalaureat and, eventually, to higher education. These good results are nevertheless hampered by the fact that immigrant children are much more likely to be oriented toward vocational and technical education and to special education sections. They are therefore less likely to complete general secondary schooling.

Cultural deprivation and cultural differences

The explanation of the specific characteristics of immigrant schooling in terms of primary cultural differences which has been so dominant in

American anthropological research has had much fewer adepts among French sociologists of education. Although the American literature on lower-class and minority children that developed during the 1960's in the United States received considerable attention from educational researchers in France in the early seventies, most critical reactions of cultural deprivation theories focused exclusively on the "class ethnocentriscm" of policies and research works which explicitly or implicitly assumed the superiority of white middle-class families' aspirations, education practices, language and attitudes to schooling (Isambert-Jamati, 1973). Empirical research designed to refute these theories was scarce and dealt almost exclusively with the attitudes and behaviors of lower-class French families and children (François, 1976, CRESAS, 1978).

Cultural conflict theories have received less attention as they have been perceived as too much derived from the American experience to be applicable to the French situation. Although culturalist analysis of immigrants' relation to schooling has flourished in a series of texts on "intercultural education", the general orientation of these texts has been either prescriptive, that is they argue for the necessity of taking into account cultural differences at school as being a good thing *per se* or entirely descriptive, that is they present a series of experiences conducted in various schools or teacher-training centers. The school as an institution is frequently critized for its indifference to the specific characteristics of immigrants but few detailed analysis of school programs, of parents-teachers or teachers-pupils interaction are provided.

An interesting exception are the research works conducted in this perspective by Vasquez (1980, 1982) who has analyzed the school behaviors of Portuguese, Spanish and Latinoamerican adolescents. She has argued that one of the reasons these children fall behind at school is that they have great difficulty in adapting to the school pace because they do not share the same conception of time dominant in industrial and post-industrial societies. Classroom observations conducted by the author also focus on secondary cultural differences. They show the importance of the social status and the migration project of parents : children whose parents have a higher social status and who are political refugees are more critical of the school pace and try more to keep the life rhythm of their country of origin at home and at school than children from immigrant parents. This is so, according to Vasquez, because immigrants tend to identify to some extent to the values

of the dominant group and sometimes to reject their own culture in order to adapt to the host country. Even those that plan to return to their country of origin sometimes think that acquiring some of the characteristics of the more developed societies will be a sign a success. Refugees, on the other hand, have not frequently chosen the host country. Their stay seems to them a transitory phase even if it lasts their whole life. They live, one could say, "in parenthesis" searching less than the other immigrants social promotion and economic success through the school and placing a higher prize on the maintenance of their cultural traditions.

Institutionalized discrimination at school

The exploration of secondary cultural differences has led some researchers to focus on discriminatory everyday pratices at school. These are particularly difficult to trace as teachers have highly interiorized the egalitarian and assimilationist philosophy of French schools which prevents them to make explicit references to differences among pupils. This is clearly shown in the research conducted by Zirotti (1980) who examined the observations written by a large sample of teachers of the Aix-Marseille region on school files of French and immigrant pupils of various nationalities. Asked to provide a detailed appreciation of students' work, most teachers answered with standardized expressions that did not operate any differences between the two groups. It is however important to note that judgements were more centered on school performance and on individual capacities in the case of French children and on school behavior for immigrant children, particularly for North Africans.

Another research conducted by Zimmerman (1978) invited teachers to judge a sample of 946 children on their physical appeareance, ways of dressing and talking, politeness and other personal characteristics. Only a minority of teachers accepted the framework proposed by the researcher that forced them to make differences in perception explicit, but the results were highly significant : children of immigrant manual workers were consistently the least considered followed by children of French workers. Children of middle-class and upper-class parents were described as the most attractive by the great majority of teachers.

Following this same line of interpretation but focusing on verbal interaction between teachers and North African pupils, Payet (1985) has shown that

teacher judgements are very frequently centered on the verbal and gestual behavior of these students who are represented not as linguistically and culturally deprived and not just as linguistically and culturally different but as potentially dangerous to school order. North African students are described as being voluble, curious, secretive, susceptible, proud. The word *insolence* which comes out frequently in teachers' discourse accurately describes this perception which rests on some current stereotypes of arab culture but which also reflects teachers' interpretations of North African's students reaction to their racial stigmatisation. Insolence is in fact a folk concept that underlines both primary and secondary cultural differences between French and North African children similar to those pointed out by Ogbu in his analysis of Black youngsters' attitudes to schooling (Ogbu, 1989).

In a more recent work, Payet (1992) has also explored other forms of school discrimination such as the implicit internal segregation between classes. This is a common (although taboo) practice in secondary French schools that try to cope in this way with the new constraints imposed by the mass arrival of lower-class children and the political injunction to maintain them as long as possible in the school system, and by the progressive abolishment of the former hierarchy of educational institutions and of internal formal streaming. The research conducted in two secondary schools located in poor and ethnic neighborhoods show how through a series of micro-decisions taken by teachers and administrators, immigrant pupils and particularly North African boys come to be segregated in the "bad classes". These classes receive the most recently arrived and the least motivated of teachers, the worst premises and the least prized teaching materials. This work also shows how pupils in these classes come to be much more frequently punished than pupils in other classes and to be classified as deviants but it does not examine the constitution of school counter-cultures such as some well-known British and American works (Willis, 1977; Foley, 1989).

Explaining immigrant success : the role of family mobilization

All of the works mentionned up to now, even those which have tried to incorporate an interactionist perpective, have focused on immigrants as victims of the school system. Compared with the growing litterature on immigrant school success in the United States and other European countries, the few French works that have dealt with this topic have centered on family mobilization, that is on the analysis of differences within

immigrant families concerning school aspirations and school-related attitudes and behaviors. The work of Zeroulou (1988) is a good exemple of this orientation. The analysis of a sample of 30 Algerian working-class families showing very contrasting school profiles (15 families where at least one of the children had attended university and 15 families where none of the children had reached the second cycle of secondary school) allows the author to underline the importance of social factors (degree of professional stability, level of instruction of parents) and of internal differences between immigrant families (age of mariage of the mother, lenght of time between migration of the father and arrival of the rest of the family) to explain success or failure.

The existence of a clear mobility project is however the most significant factor related to the presence of school-adaptation patterns very similar to those described by Gibson (1988) : the instrumental value of schooling is underlined; the conflicts in values between home and school are not ignored but are dealt with in a pragmatic way; school success is set as a norm and the family ressources in terms of money, time, competent persons, are mobilized to attain this goal. Sayad's research (1991) suggests, however, that when parents do not have a minimum of intellectual ressources to help their children with school tasks and with school choices, the overvalorisation of school success can generate children's apathy or revolt.

Other qualitative works have also shown that some immigrant and French lower-class families are able to develop school strategies that allow their children to succeed. They show that these families differ from other families in their internal organization. Unless families where migration seems to have produced family anomie, these families seems to have reinforced their internal cohesion (Bendaoud, 1985). Other works emphasize the impact of openess to external influences such as work unions, neighborhood associations, political and religious groups, in rendering immigrant families capable of managing their children's school careers (Henriot-van Zanten, 1990a, Terrail, 1984).

Looking beyond the school : the neighborhood and the workplace

Most of these works however focus exclusively on school processes without taking into account their connections with other socializing agencies such as the neighborhood and the workplace. A multi-level approach that includes

an analysis of these agencies is however necessary to understand the structural factors that influence minority school performance (Ogbu, 1981). Residential segregation for instance plays an important role on school attitudes and behavior. Although France does not possess ethnic ghettos such as those that have developped in American cities, the installation of immigrant families in urban areas has increased their concentration in degraded social housing and in abandoned neighborhoods and suburbs. The arrival of immigrant families and especially of North African families in these areas is seen as a sign of social degradation by the French inhabitants and leads either to "white flight" or to an increase in neighborhood conflicts.

Our own work (Henriot-van Zanten, 1990b) shows that this forced co-existence also generates daily "avoidance strategies" which have an impact both in the neighborhood and in the school. In the neighborhood, desire to avoid social and racial mixing leads to retreat into the family and the home, to a selective use of public places and local institutions and to a low participation in associations. At school, parents keep away from meetings and social events that involve contact with other parents and develop educational strategies based almost exclusively on individual reinforcement of school learning at home and on individual contacts with teachers. Moreover, a growing number of French (and some immigrant) parents who are economically better-off and whose children have good grades, choose to leave the neighborhood school. This process leads the school to develop a bad reputation which influences in turn the perception of the neighborhood thus creating a vicious cycle. It also leads parents and inhabitants to associate the presence of immigrant children with the lowering of school results thus reinforcing racist attitudes and segregative behavior (Léger & Tripier, 1986).

Recent research also underlines the importance of taking into account changes that have been introduced in the relationship between schooling and work for immigrant youth. Their situation is particularly complex because of the intersection of various social processes. On the one hand, statistical studies show that although immigrant youngsters are on average more qualified than their parents and tend to occupy better-paid jobs, they still suffer from a "job ceiling" that keeps them behind French youngsters of same social class (Marangé & Lebon, 1982). On the other hand, qualitative studies show that immigrant youngsters, especially those of North African descent have drawn closer to French youngsters in terms of cultural tastes

and political attitudes and that they are frequently fashion settlers and social innovators (Dubet, 1989). As mentioned earlier, this is one of the reasons that explains the considerable frustration of these youngsters which translates itself into delinquent acts or in sporadic revolt mouvements.

Variability of immigrant school performance

Despite the fact that many researchers underline the need to take into account differences between immigrants of different nationalities in school attitudes and performance, no systematic efforts have been s accomplished in this area in France (Camilleri, 1985) especially if compared with American, British, Belgian and Dutch research in this area (Jacob & Jordan, 1987, Suarez-Orozco, 1990, Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Statistics show in any case that these differences exist and that they are important enough to warrant scholarly attention. A criteria such as the percentage of pupils that stay on the second cycle of secondary schooling shows for instance that the major nationalities place themselves as follows : Africans (excluding North Africans) (17.2%), Italiens (10%) and Spaniards (9.7%), South East Asians (8.3%), Tunisians (7.2%), Algerians (6.1%), Morrocans (5.8%), Portuguese (4.3%) and Turks (2.3%) (Tripier, 1987).

Another study which takes into account several criteria such as the distribution of pupils in various "streams" and the drop out rate at different stages of the school system and which centers on four nationalities shows the following hierarchy :

Portuguese < Algerians < Italians < Spaniards

The superiority of Spaniards and Italians over the Portuguese and the Algerians does not come as a surprise. It is globally interpreted as the result of several convergent factors both cultural and socio-economic : Spaniards and Italians are among the first immigrants groups to have come to France; their cultures are perceived as "cousin" to French culture; In addition to this, both immigrants groups are those that include the highest diversification in S.E.S. and are nowadays relatively small as many of their members have acquired French citizenship. Portuguese and Algerians, on the other side, come from semi-industralized countries, occupy lower positions in the socio-economic structure and constitute the most important immigrant communities (Marangé & Lebon, 1982).

This line of interpretation, however, does not allow us to understand the differences between members of each of those two categories, especially between Algerian and Portuguese : although the first locate themselves lower in the class structure, are much more distant culturally from the French and suffer much more from racial prejudice, their children fare better than Portuguese in school. Some elements of response are provided by another study conducted under the direction of Malewska-Peyre (1982) which analyzes deviant behavior of immigrant younsters and distinguishes two major groups, Spaniards and North Africans, and boys from girls. North African girls are those that appear the more invested in their school careers because they apprehend school as a liberating force while Spanish girls' interest turn around family projects. However, these results also invite us to analyze in more detail the indicators of "success" as other works show that Portuguese students who choose vocational training are more likely to get a certificate and find a job that Algerian youngsters who stay in the general secondary system but are less likely to get the *baccaulaureat* or an University degree.

Variability in immigrant school performance cannot however be examined without a comprehensive analysis of the situation of various groups. Dubet (1989) has recently proposed to retain three main parameters to compare various groups : the degree of social and economic integration, the degree of cultural assimilation and the degree of political participation. He constructs a simple model presented below which distinguishes eight theoretical figures that can be confronted with what we presently know about immigrant groups :

Table 2 : Patterns of relationship of immigrants to French society

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Integration	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
Assimilation	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-
Participation	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-

Source : Dubet (1989).

Figure 1 and figure 8 represent two extreme positions. Immigrants that correspond the best to the first are the small elite of artists or businessmen that speak several languages, belong to several cultures and have several

passports and move smoothly from one country to the other. The last figure corresponds to groups that are socially and economically marginalized, who remain culturally excluded and who are deprived of any kind of political expression in the host society. This corresponds to the extremely precarious situations of isolated and illegal workers.

Figure 2 corresponds to some ancient immigrations caracterized by strong integration, strong assimilation and nevertheless a weak political identification with France such as the Spaniards and the Portuguese which choose to return to their native country at retirement and do not seem interested in participation in local elections opened to foreigners. This also seems to be the case for a small part of the the Algerian community that despite strong integration and assimilation does not request French citizenship. Figure 5 describes an opposite situation : that of the Harkis (Algerian soldiers loyal to the French during the Algerian Independance War, 1954-1962). This group enjoys French citizenship while being socially marginalized and culturally excluded.

Figure 3 corresponds to immigration groups that remain organized on a communitarian basis, that is they are strongly integrated on an economic level thanks particularly to the development of ethnic business but they are weakly assimilated. Sometimes they choose to become French citizens mainly because of the advantage this presents to integration and come closer to Figure 6. The immigrants groups that are the most close to these two figures are the Chinese, the South East Asians and also, to a lesser extent, the Turcs.

The most distinctive figure of French immigration remains however figure 4 which combines a weak social and economic integration and a strong cultural assimilation and leads to a strong demand for political participation. As we have already noted, immigrants that correspond best to this model are second and third generation North African youngters, more particularly those of Algerian origin. This group of immigrants comes closer to Ogbu's (1978) "involuntary" or "castelike" minorities or to DeVos and Suarez-Orozco's (1990) "disparaged" minorities because of their colonial-type relationship with the French nation, their persistently low status and negative perception by the population. However, although some of them are tempted by alternative strategies for social mobility, schooling still appears at the center of the mobility project of a considerable number of

families and youngters.

This brief overview of some of the major changes in the social reality of immigration in France and in policy and research paradigms was intended to show both the specific aspects of French developments in this area and their similarity to parallel social processes in other European countries and in the United States. It clearly shows the need for increased informed cross-cultural comparison that will reduce both the tendency to overestimate national differences and that of establishing unwarranted generalizations.

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